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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the first year of an international student teaching project conducted in Mexicali, Mexico, which was successful in helping U.S. participants develop cultural understanding and critical teaching skills needed to work with English learners. The first part of the paper discusses the history of international student teaching and describes common program features. The paper goes on to describe the uniqueness of the Mexicali Program, then explains how project coordinators from California State University San Bernardino and California State Polytechnic University Pomona: (1) selected and prepared three California credential candidates to student teach in Mexico; (2) established and maintained partnerships with Mexican educators at the Centro de Ensenaza Tecnica y Superior, Mexicali, Mexico; (3) documented program effectiveness; and (4) established guidelines for organizing future international field experiences. The paper concludes that international student teaching options should be available through more teacher education programs because of their potential for preparing new teachers to work in multicultural classrooms. (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

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BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING PROGRAM: A CALIFORNIA/MEXICO EXPERIENCE

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BACKGROUND

"I wouldn't hire someone based on one quarter's student teaching experience. I want to look at them for a longer period of time. Going overseas to teach is an artificial situation. How is that going to help you handle a classroom in California?" "Travel groups are fun but I doubt if you will learn much you can use." "Why would you want to leave the United States? Our schools are better than you will see anywhere else."

Comments like these are spoken frequently by administrators across the United States. They are common reactions to teacher education programs that offer university student teaching experiences in other countries. During a job interview, these statements can come as quite a shock to a candidate.

How much validity is there in these types of comments? Should universities be involved in this kind of process? What justification can we have for involving ourselves in places as diverse as Mexico and Malaysia?

PHILOSOPHY AND RATIONALE

At the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (CPP) and California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) teacher education programs are working to develop these types of experiences based upon the following tenants:

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1) International experiences are a means to further the development and growth of our student's personal philosophy. Through encounters with those who have developed under different conditions and background, one should be able to see oneself, one's own values, and one's society in a new light. The student should develop both understanding of other cultures and increased ability to make comparative decisions and judgments.

2) These experiences are preparation for intelligent participation in the student's own society and the furthering of international understanding. This implies that students, through immersion in another society, can better understand all human societies and in the future work more effectively as a national and international citizen.

3) Overseas student teaching is a stimulus to the student's growth in academic competence. This includes knowledge and understanding of international affairs--economic, political, social and cultural--and of the geography and physical nature of the world.

These tenants must be supported by a strong rationale. The following points should be taken into consideration when support for, and involvement in, international student teaching programs is sought:

1) A great number of university students continue to be interested in participating in alternative overseas programs.

2) Universities throughout the country have overseas programs and report both excellent experiences and high student interest.

3) Students will see different methods of application of subject matter and school organization. This should aid in developing flexible and resourceful teachers.

4) Students need to get along with people in unfamiliar and difficult situations. These will hopefully help to develop tolerance and self-confidence.

5) Students should be able to live in the environment for an extended period of time and, thus, experience learning in greater depth than a travel/study course.

6) In the majority of overseas settings, students work with young people using the same language but who live in a different culture. This should enhance both listening and speaking skills.

7) International student teachers would have an excellent opportunity to explore and develop aspects of personality, which may have been neglected.

8) An international experience will help students prepare for changes in American culture that may likely take place during their lifetime.

9) Worldmindedness is a desirable and much neglected goal of our American educational system.

10) Students should, in fact, become more salable. Experience in international systems, along with the experience in their own schools, should provide an added dimension to a student's teaching background and encourage hiring officials to more readily employ such individuals.

GETTING SPECIFIC: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

No one disputes the fact that student teaching programs should prepare our newest educators for the realities of multicultural classrooms. The state of California, for example, mandates that student teachers must have field experiences at a site that has at least twenty-five per cent "minority population." Teacher preparation programs must place California's student teachers with qualified teachers in classes of English learners before these student teachers can be credentialed to work in multicultural classrooms with non-native speakers of English. We have found, however, that simply placing student teachers in classes with diverse students often results in cultural "submersion" because they are not helped to develop the personal and professional skills needed to work with their students of different cultures and languages. In our search for good multicultural experiences for our newest teachers, are we overlooking the value of international student teaching programs?

The goal of this article is to describe the first year of an international student teaching project in Mexico that was successful in helping participants develop cultural understanding and critical teaching skills needed to work with English learners. After a brief overview of the history of international student teaching and a description of common program features, we will discuss the uniqueness of our Mexicali Program. We will then explain how project coordinators from Cal State San Bernardino and Cal Poly Pomona: 1) selected and prepared three California

credential candidates to student teach in Mexico; 2) established and maintained partnerships with Mexican educators at the Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior (CETYS), Mexicali, Mexico; 3) documented program effectiveness; and 4) established guidelines for organizing future international field experiences.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING: A NEW IDEA?

Inspired by study abroad and faculty exchange programs during the past fifty years, international student teaching options are popular but not commonly available through colleges in the United States. The Fulbright Program, begun in 1946, facilitated faculty exchanges and study abroad. During the 1950s, UNESCO promoted international exchanges in education, science, and the arts. In 1957, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education reported that a few colleges had started student exchange programs. Of course, the Peace Corps set groundbreaking international goals with its first group of volunteers in 1960. This spirit of internationalism inspired many American universities to encourage study abroad during the 1970s. During the 1980s, pre-service teacher education field experiences started to become available. In the 1990s, researchers have begun to identify international experiences as a way of preparing teachers to understand diversity (Mahan, 1985; Mahan, & Stachowski, 1990), but the connections between internationalism and multicultural education are yet to be developed in our teacher education programs.

In The State of the Profession: International Field/Student Teaching Experiences in Undergraduate Teacher Preparation (West, 1985) lists about one hundred colleges and universities that offer international programs with similar features. The earliest of these documented programs began in universities in the Midwest. Examples of continuing programs include Central Michigan University (1975), Indiana University (1977), Northern Illinois University (1980), and Bethel College/St. Cloud State University in Minnesota (1987). Studies from these universities have highlighted the positive effects on participants' development (Baker, 1985; Mahan, & Stachowski, 1985; Stachowski, 1994; Vall, & Tennison, 1991-92). The programs offered by these universities have many things in common. They take place mainly in English-speaking countries (England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand,

and Belize) or in International or American Schools where English is the language of instruction. They are short term, lasting from eight to twelve weeks. They are preceded by a student teaching experience in the United States and by some type of selection and orientation process. Extra costs, such as travel and housing, are paid by student teachers themselves. Host country stays usually include living in homes.

California State University, made up of twenty-three separate campuses, educates the largest number of teachers of any university system in the United States, but it offers limited international student teaching options. As reported in Tarrow and Sutter (1994), a consortium of four of these campuses, San Diego State, Fresno State, Sacramento State, and Cal State Long Beach, started a yearlong bilingual teacher education program for elementary school teachers. After an orientation and beginning coursework in San Diego State, participants continue to take education and Spanish classes, as well as student teaching experiences, in Mexico City. This American teacher education program is one of the few in Mexico. It offers excellent opportunities to educate bilingual elementary teachers. It is not, however, open to middle school or high school teachers or to candidates who do not speak Spanish.

THE MEXICALI PROGRAM: A UNIQUE APPROACH

The international student teaching project developed and coordinated through California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB); California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (CPP); and the Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior (CETYS), Mexicali, Mexico offers some of the features of the documented programs described above, but it is unique in at least three ways. In common with other programs participants have completed required teacher education classes, as well as their first ten weeks of student teaching in American schools to develop basic teaching competencies. Most unusual about this program is that new teachers have the opportunity to teach their academic disciplines in English to students in the secondary schools of a non-English-speaking country. In other words, participants in this program do not have to have to be able to speak Spanish. This program provides cultural immersion and language learning opportunities for English-speaking student teachers. They have been invited to teach at this *preparatoria* (senior high school) to develop the academic language skills of Mexican students.

In the process, these teachers develop their own abilities to design academic instruction in English so that English learners can understand, interact, and use literacy skills effectively.

The second thing that makes this experience unique is that it allows these student teachers to learn first-hand about Mexican schools. Despite the proximity to Mexico, most of California's teachers have only a superficial knowledge of Mexican cultures and the school systems in which almost one million of California's students began their education. This cultural immersion into the professional life of the target country builds on the benefits of living with the Mexican teachers and their families, a feature common to other international student teaching programs.

A third way in which the Mexicali program is unique is that it is geographically accessible and financially possible for student teachers with limited resources. Since it is a three to four hour driving distance from Cal State San Bernardino and Cal Poly Pomona, travel expenses are kept to a minimum. To encourage participation, the cost of housing student teachers with Mexican families has been paid by the Mexican host institution. Student teachers pay only regular tuition and fees and normal living expenses. The three ways in which this program is unique makes it easy to convince prospective participants of its value and feasibility.

SELECTING AND CONNECTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHERS

As reported in previous studies (Korsgaard, 1995; Vall, & Tennison, 1991-92; Stachowski, & Visconti, 1996; among others), the selection and cultural orientation of participants is critical to the success of international student teaching experiences. After advertising through brochures, university publications and bulletin boards, student-advising sessions, visits to "feeder" classes, personal follow-ups to all inquiries brought the most adventurous students to my office. It took time to find out why students wanted to live in a foreign country and if they seemed willing to adapt to new living and teaching conditions. Careful interviewing was necessary to screen applicants who did not seem to be mature enough to be successful. The initial group selected for the Mexicali program consisted of a social science teacher and two teachers of English as a second language.

Some documented programs provide yearlong cultural orientation programs for identified participants. Such extensive preparation, although desirable, would be impossible given the fact that California educates its teachers through a fifth year system. That is to say, most people entering a teacher education program in California have completed their undergraduate degree; they complete teacher preparation within a single calendar year. They are often well into the program before they give serious attention to student teaching options.

All participants in the Mexicali program were not identified, therefore, until several months before departure. Our cultural orientation relied on the fact that our teacher education curriculum was deeply contextualized in issues of diversity that include early field experiences in public schools (all levels) which integrate theories and practices in multicultural, multilingual education.. Gen. ral background in Mexican culture and the needs of Mexican-American students were an important part of every student's required course of study. These carried over into more focused cultural orientation sessions that took place in California and Mexico soon after all participants in the Mexicali program were selected.

The orientation session in California stressed group building and provided an introduction to the program and life as an American teacher in Mexico. The more formal part of the process included videotaped statements of their reasons for wanting to student teach in Mexico and of their expectations for the program.

A cultural "expert," a professor from CSUSB, came to this orientation session to describe her experiences growing up in the city of Mexicali. She initiated a discussion on the visible and invisible aspects of Mexican culture. The tangible realities included food, transportation, housing, holidays, language use, non-verbal communication, appropriate dress for teachers, as well as a description and history of Mexicali itself. The final focus of this orientation was Mexican schools and school systems. The discussion included the roles of public and private schools, as well as general information about CETYS and the high school located on its campus.

A three-day cultural orientation in Mexicali provided a tour of the campus, as well as in-depth discussions of school policies and expectations for teachers. During this period, student teachers met school administrators, teachers, and host families; they also visited classes and became acquainted with the community. After spring break, they returned to Mexicali to

continue this introductory period prior to teaching classes as part of their student teaching requirements.

ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS WITH MEXICAN EDUCATORS

As reported in other international programs, institutional partnerships between our three institutions resulted from personal contacts among faculty members. The institutional support of two American universities, one Mexican university, and a Mexican high school was the result of a series of initial meetings with all key players to establish goals and agree on procedures, commitments (personal and financial), and timetables. To advise and help to place student teachers, the American coordinators met with Mexican department chairs and teachers to learn about high school programs, course syllabi and materials. To insure on-site support for student teachers, the American coordinators met with Mexican colleagues to explain California's teacher education programs. Since Mexico does not have an equivalent to student teaching in its teacher preparation programs, the responsibilities of cooperating teachers and university advisors were the subject of many discussions.

We found that the observation and evaluation process required the most time and attention since cooperating teachers were hesitant to offer teaching suggestions, fearing they would be misunderstood. The program effectiveness was formally evaluated before planning for next cycle of collaboration.

DOCUMENTING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of this initial year of the International Student Teaching Program in Mexicali was documented through student teachers' self-evaluations; through evaluations of student teachers by cooperating teachers, Mexican students, and university advisors; and through program evaluations by student teachers, Mexican administrators, and Mexican teachers. Student teachers' self-evaluations were an integral part of the reflection process upon which our teacher education programs are based. Through this process, the student teachers recorded and analyzed their own professional, cultural, and linguistic development throughout the program. Documentation includes the Cross-cultural Adaptability Survey (Kelley, & Meyers, 1992)

completed at the start and end of the experience: frequent interactions with university advisors through teaching journals delivered via e-mail, regular mail, and on-site visits; as well as videotaped interviews and class visits.

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to fully describe student teachers' complex development as demonstrated in the data listed above, the following examples demonstrate significant personal and professional growth, as well as program effectiveness. The Cross-cultural Adaptability Survey is a formal survey that quantitatively measures emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, personal autonomy, and perceptual acuity. All three program participants showed growth in three out of four areas. Participants explained their growth in these ways. "Over all, my understanding of the Mexican people increased with my knowledge and ability to communicate with them. This experience will help me to be an effective teacher...especially with Mexican students." [MM] "This experience has happened at a 'growing' time for me...I would have to say that there is little that scares me about being in a classroom anywhere." [ML] "I think the growth probably has to do with the fact that I...felt unsure about my ability to be flexible, open and adapt successfully to the new situation I was personal experience, but to say that I figured out another culture in two months would be dishonest...It almost takes that long to begin to understand a person....this is very complicated" [ML]

Mexican participants, including a CETYS administrator, the principal of the Mexican high school, and the three cooperating Mexican teachers, two of whom served as department chairpersons, also evaluated the program at the end of the student teaching period. They stated that the program benefited them, their schools, and international relations in many ways. "(The program helped by) expanding arena of collaboration between CPP and CETYS... extending arena of collaboration to include CSUSB... exploring natural ties given geographical proximity and principle of complementarity." [FL] "My English has improved and I see that having a bilingual school is not as difficult as I thought." [EV] "(It was) a worthwhile experience... (It) helped in the development of teaching practices by helping me examine my own. It gave me the opportunity to see other teaching styles, exchange ideas and resources; and practice English." [EE] "I've learned a lot from both student teachers...Not only as the teachers that they already

are, that is, methodology, activities for students, etc., but as persons that could involve themselves within a different cultural environment." [MPC] "It's given me the opportunity to learn different teaching techniques. M... always showed a very high spirit when it came to sharing and really got involved in our institution activities. Even on something as simple as materials and resources, I've had the chance to have information on some books that definitely will help me in my job." [RH]

The following chart shows the average of evaluations given by the student teachers and Mexican participants. The last item on this survey asked for suggestions, which will be reported as guidelines for future programs. facing in the beginning of the experience...presently I feel ecstatic about having successfully completed this experience...my ability to cope with different people and different situations has been proven." [HL]

Teaching journals provided the most comprehensive and perhaps compelling evidence of personal and professional growth. In these written logs of their daily experiences, these new teachers described their treks through the natural peaks and valleys of the student teaching period. Because they had to deal with cultural and linguistic immersion as well as professional immersion, their descriptions highlight exhaustion, uncertainties, and occasionally, elation. While learning about Mexican culture, student teachers gave vivid anecdotal accounts of hanging out with neighborhood kids, visiting cemeteries at night with friends to read tombstones, bumping into their high school students who could legally drink anywhere in town, and spending Sundays welcoming guests at home with their families. They described their participation in special conferences on border issues and their discussions on controversial immigration issues.

In terms of classroom competencies, their teaching logs described lessons using cooperative learning, role-playing, and projects. They explained how they spent hours making audio-visuals with limited resources. They struggled with meeting the needs of students with very different levels of competence in English. They adapted English texts for students' use and pushed students to express themselves in writing for academic purposes. They worked through their frustrations by writing action plans in which they identified areas for improvement.

Videotaped interviews and program evaluations provide concise and articulate summaries of student teachers' development.

Table 1: Student Teaching Program Evaluation (1=very good; 2=good; 3=fair)

n=3 [except as indicated] n=5 [except as indicated]

		Am student teachers	Mexican admin & teachers	
Organization of the Program				
1.	Orientation to the program in California	1.7	NA	
	Orientation to the program in Mexico	1.7	1.4	
2.	Procedures for placing student teachers	1.5 [n=2]	1.2	
3.	Procedures for supervising eval st. teachers	2	1	
4.	General communication			
	with Cal State professors	1.7	1	
	with CETYS high school staff	1.3	1	
	with other student teachers	1	1.2	
	with CETYS staff	1.7	1.4	
5.	Background of Student teachers (upon arrival)			
	subject matter preparation	1.7	1	[n=4]
	teacher education preparation	1	1	[n=4]
	understanding of Mexican culture	2	1.5	[n=4]
	understanding of Mexican school system	2.3	2	[n=4]
	competence in Spanish	2.7	2.75	[n=4]
6.	Your adjustment to CETYS' program & policies	1.7	NA	
7.	Impact of student teachers on students & school	1.3	1	
8.	Impact of this int'l program on student teachers			
	as teachers	1.3	1	[n=4]
	as persons	1	1	[n=4]
	understanding of Mexican culture	1.3	1	[n=4]
	understanding of Mexican school system	1.7	1.75	[n=4]
	competence in Spanish	1	1.75	[n=4]
General				
8.	Has this program benefited you? How?	Yes: 3	Yes: 5	
9.	Would you choose to be involved with the program again?	Yes: 3	Yes: 5	
10.	Would you recommend this program to others?	Yes: 3	Yes: 5	

In their program evaluations, student teachers gave these realistic responses when asked how the program benefited them. "My experience at CETYS was great. I learned many things my fellow teachers in California have no way of knowing unless they live and teach in Mexico...my experiences will enable me to be more effective with Mexicans/Mexican-Americans in the U.S." [MM] "(It was) an excellent experience as a person and especially as a teacher...I was able to practice and witness what I have learned as a Spanish major, in language and culture...I could say that I have been exposed to a kaleidoscope view of Mexican education." [HL] Evaluations by Mexican students present another part of the picture of student teachers' development and program effectiveness. In response to specific teaching competencies (1-10), all student teachers were rated very good in all areas. Open-ended responses to question 11 (What is the most important thing you learned from your teacher?) reinforced Mexican students' evaluations of student teachers' success in designing classes for English learners, facilitating intercultural communication, and working in the Mexican school system. Students' suggestions for improvement (question 12) will be incorporated into guidelines for future programs.

ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE INTERNATIONAL FIELD EXPERIENCES

The success of the initial year of the Mexicali program has been documented. All participants agreed that the three student teachers who had completed the program would bring invaluable cultural insights and teaching skills to their multicultural classrooms in the United States. Plans are underway to expand the Mexicali program so that teaching credential candidates from other CSU Schools of Education will be able student teach at the high schools located on the campuses of all three CETYS institutions (Mexicali, Tijuana, Ensenada). The following guidelines are proposed for the expansion of this program and for planning similar programs through other institutions. The suggestions of all participants in this pilot program have been incorporated into these guidelines.

Table 2: Mexican High School Student Evaluation of Student Teachers

Evaluations by Mexican high school students: n=124 [1=very good; 2=good; 3=fair]

		MM [n=36]	HL [n=41]	ML [n=47]	AV [n=124]
1.	Are you comfortable working with your teacher?	1.02	1.3	1.2	1.2
2.	Does your teacher encourage/respect your ideas?	1.02	1.2	1.1	1.1
3.	Is your teacher well prepared for class?	1	1.3	1.1	1.1
4.	Do you understand your teacher's lessons?	1.08	1.4	1.3	1.2
5.	Does your teacher make classes interesting?	1	1.6	1.2	1.3
6.	Does your teacher grade your work fairly?	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2
7.	Is your teacher available to help after class?	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.2
8.	Does your teacher show respect for your culture?	1.02	1.1	1.1	1.1
9.	Does your teacher show respect for your language?	1	1.04	1.1	1
10.	Does your teacher understand and follow important school policies?	1	1.2	1.2	1.1

11. What is the most important thing you learned from your teacher?

	MM [n=36]	HL [n=41]	ML [n=47]	TOTAL [n=124]
Good teaching methods help me learn				
interesting (not boring) classes	19	3	10	32
use of lots of materials	2	1	0	3
easy to understand presentations	6	0	1	7
use of "real life" examples	1	0	2	3
Teachers' positive attitudes help me learn				
enthusiasm	4	0	3	7
openness/respect/new ideas/customs	5	13	5	23
good rapport/respect for young people	11	11	8	30
builds students' self- confidence	3	5	6	14
People of different cultures can work together	7	3	3	13
My culture is important to me	1	0	0	1
I can learn English (general)	5	3	12	20

Table 2 continued:

I learned English (specific skills)	0	12	35	37
grammar/spelling	0	2	7	9
writing skills	0	3	13	16
vocabulary building	0	0	2	2
reading skills	0	0	1	1

	thinking skills	0	2	1	3
	creativity/make up stories	0	0	2	2
	speaking skills/Am pronoun	0	4	8	12
	listening skills	0	1	2	3
	American English is different than what is learned in Mexico	0	1	2	3
	Learning other languages is important	0	1	0	1
	Specific lesson/activity:	0	10	0	10
	paper cranes	0	10	0	10
13.	Would you like another teacher from California? [n=122]				
	YES	36	37	44	117
	NO	0	3	2	5

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH STUDENT TEACHERS

Screen applicants carefully

Provide in-depth cultural orientations in the U.S. and Mexico

Arrange for more "field trips" to Mexican schools and cultural sites in different areas

Define teaching responsibilities and curriculum as early and as clearly as possible

Provide strong teacher education support through longer on-site visits

Maintain constant lines of communication and feedback via e-mail

Celebrate successes

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH MEXICAN COUNTERPARTS

Use formal and informal meetings to review and prioritize needs

Ask and encourage questions during on-site visits in Mexico

Arrange for Mexican counterparts to visit U.S. campuses

Maintain constant lines of communication and feedback via e-mail

Maintain on-going evaluation

Celebrate successes

GUIDELINES FOR AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES/SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION

Involve as many participants/support bases as possible on both sides of the border (community, faculty, administrators, and students)

Maintain constant lines of communication

Seek internal and external funding for international student teaching programs

Celebrate successes

FINAL THOUGHTS:

International student teaching options need to become available through more teacher education programs. In our search to help educators work in classrooms with diverse students, we should not overlook the richness of field experiences in foreign countries. Of course, we need to continually refine and evaluate the goals and procedures of these international experiences. Just as importantly, we need to document our successes to promote their value. Following designs such as the one presented by Mahan and Stachowski (1990), future research in this area should compare the results of international student teaching experiences to student teaching experiences in multicultural settings in American schools. Student teaching programs overseas are not for everyone, but teacher education has barely begun to tap their potential for preparing new teachers to work in multicultural classrooms.

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